

**Dada Circus, by Adam Fieled, was produced by the Outlaw Playwrights in
State College, Pa, on September 24, 1998.**

(A man in black ambles slowly and deliberately onstage, possibly bearing roses. He seats himself in a chair at a table stage left. His name is James Douglas.)

J: Everything's a fight these days. We've got to fight evil! Fight racism! Free the Tibetan monks! Help the Bosnians with money, blood, sweat and tears! I see kids walking around today wearing army jackets from some thrift-store, and you know it doesn't mean a thing to them. The kids aren't fighting; it's the Baby Boomers, that's who's at the heart of our modern malaise! They know damn well that they had it better than any generation in American history— no world wars and no AIDS. I, personally, identify with these kids today. But then, I'm young at heart. (violent knock at the door) Probably someone soliciting for some goddamned Mothers Against Drunk Driving— (James opens the door to find three men in nothing but boxer shorts— Elmer, Homer, and Omar)

E: Are you James Douglas?

J: Are you a homosexual?

E: No sir— we are Elmer!

H: Homer!

O: And Omar!

E, H, O: (in unison) We're a pseudo-quasi-ersatz-alterna-white-funk-Chili Pepper rip off band!

J: Chili Pepper wha...?

E: Could you please let us in, sir? We're freezing.

J: Why the hell should I let you hoodlums into my humble abode?

E: Did you not hear us? We are Elmer!

H: Homer!

J: Alright, alright, come in. (they enter) Now what the hell are you doing here? I ain't givin' any money to no charity!

E: We're from the Society for the Humane Treatment of Overused Undergarments, and if you don't clothe us, we'll have to shampoo you (holding up Pert-Plus bottle).

O: Have you ever witnessed an Oriental Shampoo attack? It isn't pleasant.

(E, H, O form a circle around James, shampoo their hands)

J: (nervously) Do you boys like paintings? I could give you one in lieu of clothes— I'm an artist too!

H: Really?

O: Far out? We can't shampoo this guy! (the circle disperses)

J: Alright, now get the hell outta here.

E: We're naked and it's freezing— have you no compassion?

J: No! I ain't got no come, and I ain't got no passion! (grabbing them) Now git! (slams shut the door) Y' know, they say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. They'll find clothes, and they'll be stronger for having suffered. Just between you and me, I know this is some artsy-fartsy play. I know you're watching me, and I don't like it. It's Orwellian. What do you want me to do, jumping jacks? (starts doing jumping jacks) Now this is character development! This is transformation! I am in the moment! I am playing the lines! I am playing the lines! (he stops) Alright, now I'll sit here and wait. (violent knock at door). Probably another naked rock band...

(James opens the door to find a man in a Richard Nixon Halloween mask. We'll call him Dick.)

D: Trick or treat?

J: Is it Halloween?

D: No! It's the 24th anniversary of the first day of Watergate hearings! Long live Tricky Dick!

J: Now here's a real man! Alright, Dick, you can come in on one condition— you have to leave your mask on. Here, have a seat. (Dick sits) So, I was telling the audience earlier that the Baby Boomer generation is the source of our modern malaise— wouldn't you agree?

D: Let me contact Nixon for an answer.

J: You can communicate with him?

D: Yes, but it's funny— he doesn't want to talk about politics. After Nixon died he went into therapy— it's done wonders for his self-esteem. He and Pat are even making love again.

J: Without bodies?

D: No; apparently they've taken to possessing Bill and Hillary in their intimate moments.

J: I thought Hillary Clinton was frigid?

D: She is. Hillary is a prostitute working the red-light district of Washington.

J: Is she attractive?

D: Richard says she looks like Nancy Reagan, but thinner.

J: Can I ask you a personal question?

D: What?

J: Do you have any allegorical significance?

D: No, I'm a cipher.

J: Sorry to hear it.

D: The pay's good and I'm going to write a posthumous memoir.

J: Will it sell?

D: Richard's BIG in purgatory.

J: So the Catholics are right?

D: No- in heaven that's what they call New Jersey.

(Knock on door—James answers—Attractive middle-aged Anne Bancroft type)

J: Who're you? You better not try to sell me something!

C: I'm Claire Avon and I'm sleeping with your son!

J: Well then you better come right in and tell me all the juicy parts!

D: Ha! Ha! Ha! It's just like "The Graduate"! Richard loves that one! "Here's to you, Mrs. Robinson, Jesus loves you..."

J: (cutting him off) That's enough, Dick. Have a seat, Claire.

C: There are no chairs.

J: I didn't say have a chair, Claire!

C: (seating herself on the floor) Your son is ruining my life!

D: Wait...I feel Richard coming...yes! He wants to say...Claire...your...you can't say that, sir, you're a President!

C: (approaching Dick) You can communicate with spirits?

D: Just Richard Nixon. Why do you think I'm so happy all the time?

J: Alright, Claire, obviously you want me to help you, and you're certainly well made up. In fact, I'm not sure where the makeup stops and you start.

C: Your son is mad— he's always kicking and punching and screaming and yelling!

J: Then why don't you have any bruises?

C: He doesn't hurt me— he just punches and kicks aimlessly, and in public places too. It's embarrassing!

D: So why don't you leave him, and then you can...Mr. President!

C: I can't leave Andre...he's the most considerate lover I've ever had!

(At this point, the action freezes. Elmer appears onstage again, still clad in boxers. He snaps his fingers and Claire, James, and Dick collapse. Elmer sits center stage, Indian style.)

E: That scene was going downhill fast, and now here I am because the playwright wants to jar you. (Rising, bellowing) My friends are dead! The band is over! No more cocaine! No more groupies! No more amps that go to 11 and MTV Music Awards with Courtney Love! (he snaps his fingers)

(C, J, D rise to their former positions)

J: (advancing to Claire) Well, why don't you just...

(Elmer snaps— C, D, J collapse)

E: I wonder if I could get these idiots to sing the Doors. (Addressing them) When I snap my fingers, you will all become Jim Morrison simultaneously. (He snaps his fingers)

(J, C, D rise, link arms, line dance, singing "Come on baby light my fire" twice— the third time, Elmer snaps his fingers and they collapse again.)

E: It seems I have complete control over these people onstage— but how much control do I have over you? I want you all to laugh at me. Do it!...Do it! It's just a game, right? I don't care what you do. It's every man for himself, cause this is war! Everything's a fight these days, isn't it? We've got to fight evil! Fight racism! Free the Tibetan monks!

(James rises indignantly)

J: Now wait a minute, boy— those are my lines!

E: You're the only one allowed to fight evil?

J: Wake Richard Nixon up, too.

E: Richard Nixon can't wake up. That's what being Richard Nixon means!

J: (attacking him) Why you little...

(Action freezes. Homer and Omar appear onstage, normally dressed. They snap their fingers and James and Elmer collapse.)

H: When we die, the play's over.

O: Pretty existential, isn't it?

H: Not if you look at it metaphysically.

O: Which means?

H: We're actors playing a scene. "Actor" is just a personalization of action, and everyone is performing an action at all times.

O: Even Richard Nixon?

H: No— we're talking about the living.

O: What about a Republican like George Bush?

H: Again, no— we're talking about the living.

O: So what action is George Bush performing at all times?

H: Masturbation.

O: But aren't the dead, just by not living, performing a sort of negative action?

H: Ask Keith Richards.

O: We sound like we're in a Tom Stoppard play.

H: No, not a Tom Stoppard play, THE Tom Stoppard play.

O: He's only written one?

H: Yes— the rest he just sort of threw up.

O: That's an action.

H: Isn't Tom Stoppard not an actor?

O: That's true.

H: Affirmation— twenty-love!

O: What?

H: You called?

O: Huh?

H: We're playing the question game.

O: Explanation— twenty-all!

(Elmer rises, screams, charges between Homer and Omar)

E: Plagiarizing! You're plagiarizing!

H: It's in the script. (he pulls out a copy) Have a look.

E: It's a sham! It's a travesty of a mockery of a mockery of a sham!

O: That's plagiarized too.

E: At least he's honest.

O: Me?

E: No, the playwright.

H: Oh— him.

O: Are we honest?

E: Who knows? There's no plot in this piece and no character development. It's DADA— we're not really anything.

H: That's the playwright talking.

E: I didn't write the play.

O: No one does.

H: How Zen.

E: Shall we meditate?

(Homer, Elmer, Omar line up at front of stage, close their eyes, assume lotus position. Dick rises.)

D: You have no idea how uncomfortable it is in this mask. I don't know why I accepted this role—I'm not even getting paid. I've spent half of this thing on my back, the other half singing "Light My Fire" and pretending to be a Republican psychic. I have some news for you, folks—there are no Republican psychics.

(Claire rises)

C: And I get to be the Avon lady—real fuckin' funny! I've had the stupidest lines in the whole script!

D: That "considerate lover" bit?

C: I cringed in rehearsal every time I read it. I asked them to edit it out.

D: Are you fucking a teenager?

C: I am a fucking teenager!

(James rises)

J: Why are we all just standing around? This is a play, isn't it? Whoever heard of a play where nothing happens?

C: Well, look, they're meditating.

J: Is that really an action?

D: We talked about this before, didn't we?

C: Someone did.

(J, D, C snap their fingers—E, H, O rise—E, H, O snap their fingers—J, D, C collapse)

E: Do you get the feeling we're not alone here?

H: And why do we keep snapping our fingers?

O: Remember—the other three.

E: Oh, the other three—of course.

H: We're stagnating, guys.

O: I bet they're getting tired of the whole "stand up, collapse" bit.

E: Now wait a minute! Obviously we're here for a reason— they'll be patient—
(scanning audience) won't you?

H: Dammit, I've got something in my boot!

O: Does it hurt?

H: He wants to know if it hurts...

(Elmer snaps his fingers—H, O collapse)

E: I know in the script I'm supposed to commit suicide now. Just because this started as a comedy, you thought it would end one? Here's a secret for you, folks— change is absolute. Change is the only Absolute in the Universe! This is LIVING THEATER— it doesn't create a fantasy world for you to lose yourself in— it confronts you with life! Sure it's pretentious, but it's better than some sitcom, right? Isn't art supposed to grab you by the balls? By the neck (screaming) By the throat? (Elmer clutches his neck, choking, collapsing)

END PLAY